

# **Development of the Sustainable Procurement in Durham**

## **The authority**

Durham County Council in England

11 600 inhabitants

## **Brief Summary**

In 1998 Durham County Council started to implement the Sustainable Environment Policy in order to be more environmentally responsible. They put together the Procurement Strategy 2003-2005, which stated that the procurements Durham County Council carries out, should be sustainable and take in consideration social, environmental and economic point of views. Since then they have become more and more advanced in sustainable procurement field.

## **Detailed description**

Durham County Council adopted their first sustainable procurement policy in 1998. It showed the first commitment towards sustainable purchasing. The aim of this document was to start being environmentally responsible and trying to purchase resource efficiently. The main activity was initiated by Durham County Council's Central Purchasing Unit. They started to include the Environmental Policy with all tender documents and also to include the standard clauses specifying minimum packaging. In general point of view, they tried to develop the whole-life cost approach including energy-efficiency, durability etc. But as Audit Commission verdict in December 2001, the activities made were not able to give great prospects for improvement.

That is why, in February 2002 Durham County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee began to investigate, how well the Sustainable Environment Policy has been implemented. Because the results were not what were expected, DCC hired the new Head of Corporate Procurement in March 2003 hoping to get better results from implementing Sustainable Environmental Policy into DCC. After that the Central Purchasing Unit were re-named as Corporate Procurement Unit and later to Corporate Procurement Division. The office started to do sustainability "Health-checks" for tender documents of all centrally negotiated DCC documents. Sustainable Procurement was also included in DCC procurement staff training events.

DCC created and implemented a new Procurement Strategy for 2003-2005, which includes sustainability aspects. The sustainability review (health check) will be carried out on tender documents for all County Council contracts to ensure that environmental and social responsibility issues are addressed. In this Strategy DCC promises to procure the best value goods, work and services. For doing that, they adopt the product's whole-life approach, applying effective, innovative and modern procurement processes and ensuring that procurement helps to deliver the Council's key corporate objectives.

Procurement Strategy also states that DCC will address sustainability in all procurements, they should recognise the impact on the social, economic and environmental well being.

DCC is carrying out the provision of appropriate advice and support to suppliers and contractors on environmental and ethical issues e.g. through training and awareness.

The followings are few examples what have DCC purchased:

- Dual Fuel (Petrol/LPG) vehicles;
- Recycled Paper ;
- Wood pellet fuel;
- 'EcoThaw' - salt additive (by-product of molasses);
- Biodegradable bags;
- Fairtrade products;
- Recycled office stationary;
- Secondary (recycled) aggregates;
- Recycled plastic benches and outdoor products.

DCC has made a good start on path towards sustainable procurement. And now they have high-level commitment and will of moving further on these steps.